WELCOME

to

XX POW

camp

STALAG LUFT 1·BARTH·GERMANY

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LITHOGRAPHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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INTRODUCTION

We welcome you to Stalag Luft 1, permanent air camp for officers, located in the small seaport town of Barth, Germany—where fleas flourish, winds storm out of the Baltic Sea, fashions are set by the men who wear them, beds are boards, and a sumptuous diet of Jerry rations is offered every day.

There we Kriegies learned to cook, washed clothes, dug tunnels, played in puddles, perfected our rugby and baseball, traded "zigarettens" for "swiebels," read books, developed hobbies. We laughed at the men and routine there—to keep from crying.

"Krieg" is the German word for war. A prisoner of war was known as a "Kriegie." We Kriegies numbered thousands. There were 8,000 American Air Force personnel, including some of the most famous aces —Col. Hubert Zemke, who is credited with shooting down 28 German planes in air battles, Lt. Col. Gabreski, Major Beason, and many others, some of whom spent as many as two years at Stalag Luft.

Among the Kriegies there were numerous RAF personnel; some had been at the camp for five years. Approximately 2,000 were officers of the Belgian, Polish, Yugoslavian, Free French, Australian, New Zeland, South African, and Canadian air forces, attached to the RAF. Also present were a group of Russian fliers, but for some reason they were kept separate from the rest of us, and we were not able to become well acquainted with them.

The cartoons in this book were done by Flight Sgt. Budgen of the RAF, prisoner of war for three years, and Squadron Leader B. Arct, Belgian flier attached to the RAF.

We wish to dedicate this collection of cartoons, which depict our daily life as Kriegies, to the work of the YMCA and the International Red Cross, who so generously supplied us with materials which made our lives more bearable. Had it not been for the help of these two organizations, there would have been little humor in our stay at Stalag Luft 1 —only tragedy.

We further dedicate the book to the Army Air Forces of the United States, the RAF, and all the air forces of the United Nations associated with the RAF. And to those men who were more unfortunate than we who were destined to spend months, even years, in prisoner of war camps.

"The secret of being miserable is to have the leisure to bother about whether you are happy or not."—George Bernard Shaw.

BACHELOR OFFICERS QUARTERS

This is where we lived. Even in a prison camp, in army parlance it's still "B.O.Q." Here 18 to 22 Kriegies fitted snugly into an 18- by 22-foot room. Crowded? A little. But it was cozy. Here we slept and dressed and cooked and drew pictures and plotted plans not meant for German ears.

Like all Gaul, we were divided, but into more than three parts. The British were housed separately from the Americans. Even the Jews were put off by themselves. The Russians were placed in an area where they couldn't communize the rest of us.

At night German guards tucked us in, locked the doors, and barred the shutters. Later little slits were added above the windows—so we could breathe as well as sleep.

THE LIBRARY

Stalag Luft 1 was divided into four compounds. Each of the compounds had a library. And outside each library there was a bulletin board where the Germans kept us posted on the latest news—German version. Happenings unpleasant to the Jerries were often ignored for weeks at a time.

From the bulletin board and other German sources, talk by new arrivals and letters from home, we gleaned enough information to put out a news sheet. A war correspondent who had joined us was editor.

THE DEVIL AND HIS PITCHFORK

Some of the stories of how we landed in Germany were almost unbelievable, and they became even more unbelievable as they were retold and told again.

Our planes were shot down. And in one way or another, there we were on German soil. Some of us parachuted into trees, where farmers armed with pitchforks or scythes demanded our surrender.

MIEN HIMMEL! SOME FISHING

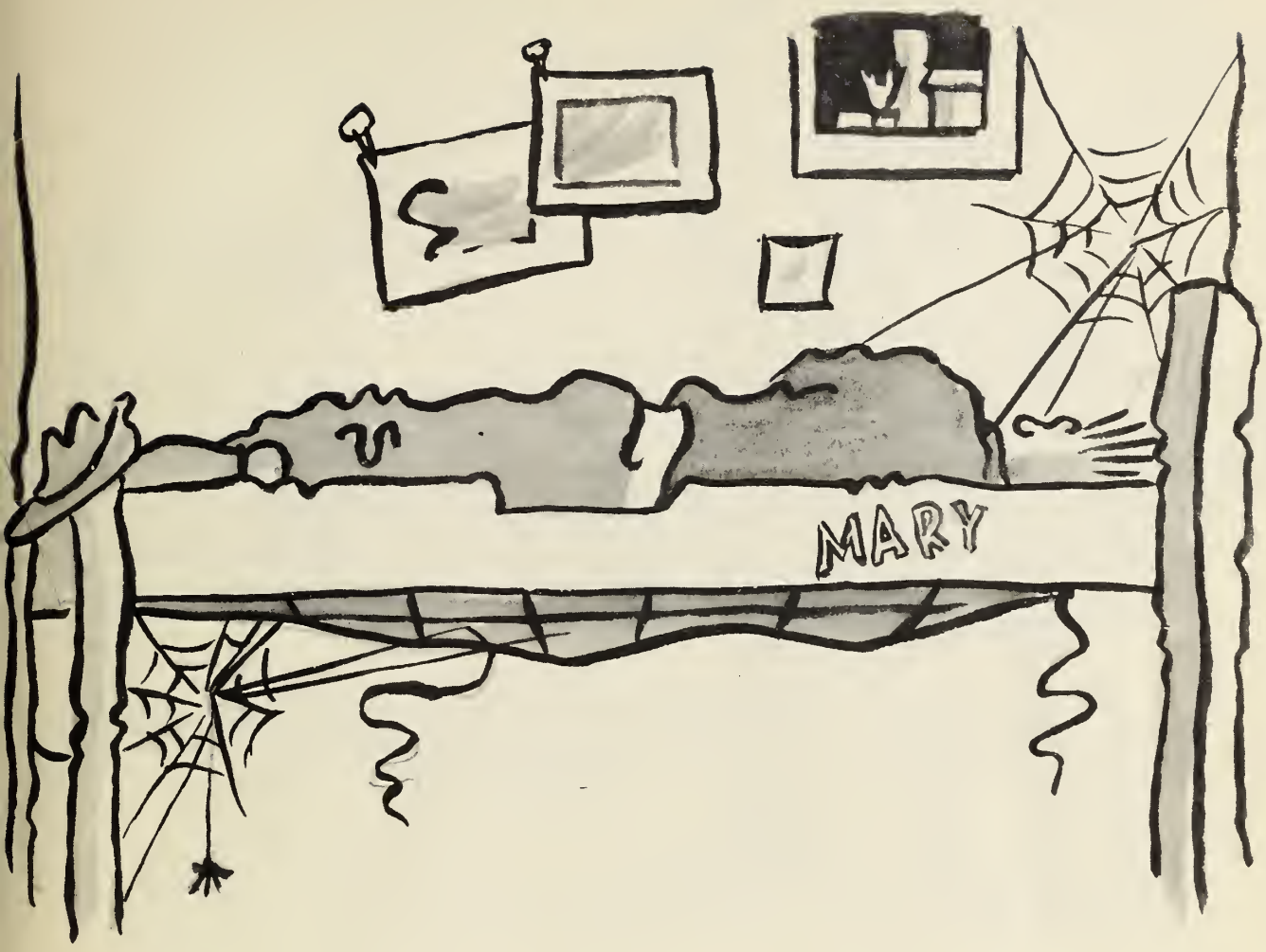
Some of us were fished out of lakes by the seat of our uniforms. And pants were hard to get in Germany.

But all roads led us eventually to Stalag Luft 1, and the life of a Kriegie.

WELL, HERE I AM

Our first stop along the way was an interrogation camp, where we were quizzed on our knowledge of military matters and suffered various indignities for our ignorance. Ultimately we were sent to transit camp, where we ate our first cooked meal. Then on again—to Stalag Luft 1.

We wore the clothes we landed in. And we carried a food parcel furnished by the International Red Cross. If we were lucky, we had a cardboard suitcase, also from the Red Cross, which contained pajamas, toothbrush, toothpaste, and shaving equipment.



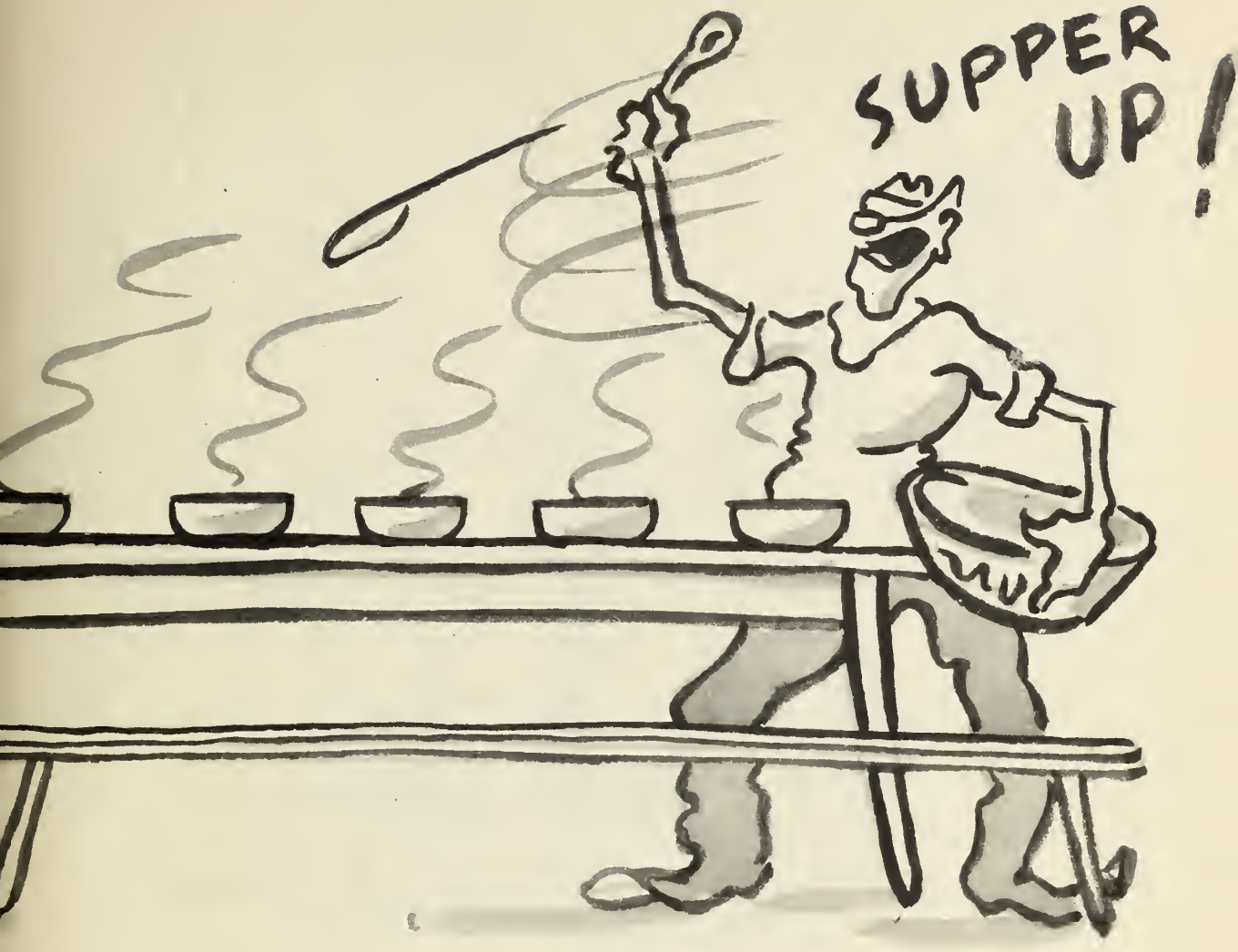
AND HERE I SLEEP

Our wooden mattresses seemed to get harder and harder as the night wore on. For a while we comforted ourselves with the knowledge that sleep on hard beds is more refreshing than sleep on feathers. Then Yankee ingenuity came to the rescue. And at odd times we clipped wire from the barbed wire fences and removing the barbs had springs—and slept in comfort.

NO KRIEGIE HEILS

Twice a day we had rall call. Before Himmler took cammand the German officer would salute aur commanding officer German Army fashion. But with Himmler as aur ruler the Nazi salute was the order af the day, which we refused to recagnize.

Until everything was in arder the German afficer would not caunt us. Same days, when several af our number had effected an escape, we preferred not ta be caunted. And we refused ta came ta attention while the German afficer waited mare ar less patiently all day until we were ready.



SUPPER UP!

"Barley up," "Soup up"—it seemed to be all those Britishers could say. Before long we took their expression and made it ours—when it came to serving our meals, and when it came to other things.

During the daytime we always posted a guard of our own outside the barracks to keep inquisitive Germans from turning up too suddenly. The warning the guard gave of their approach was "Goon up." The word puzzled the Germans, not used to American slang.

"Vas means this 'goon'?" they would ask, and we explained patiently that in America goon meant. . . .

IN THE NAME OF COFFEE—OPEN

To the kitchen we had ta ga far hat water to make caffee and wash dishes. Sometimes the kitchen was clased as tight as the cave of the farty thieves. And there was no magic ward to offer.

JACK WITHOUT A JILL

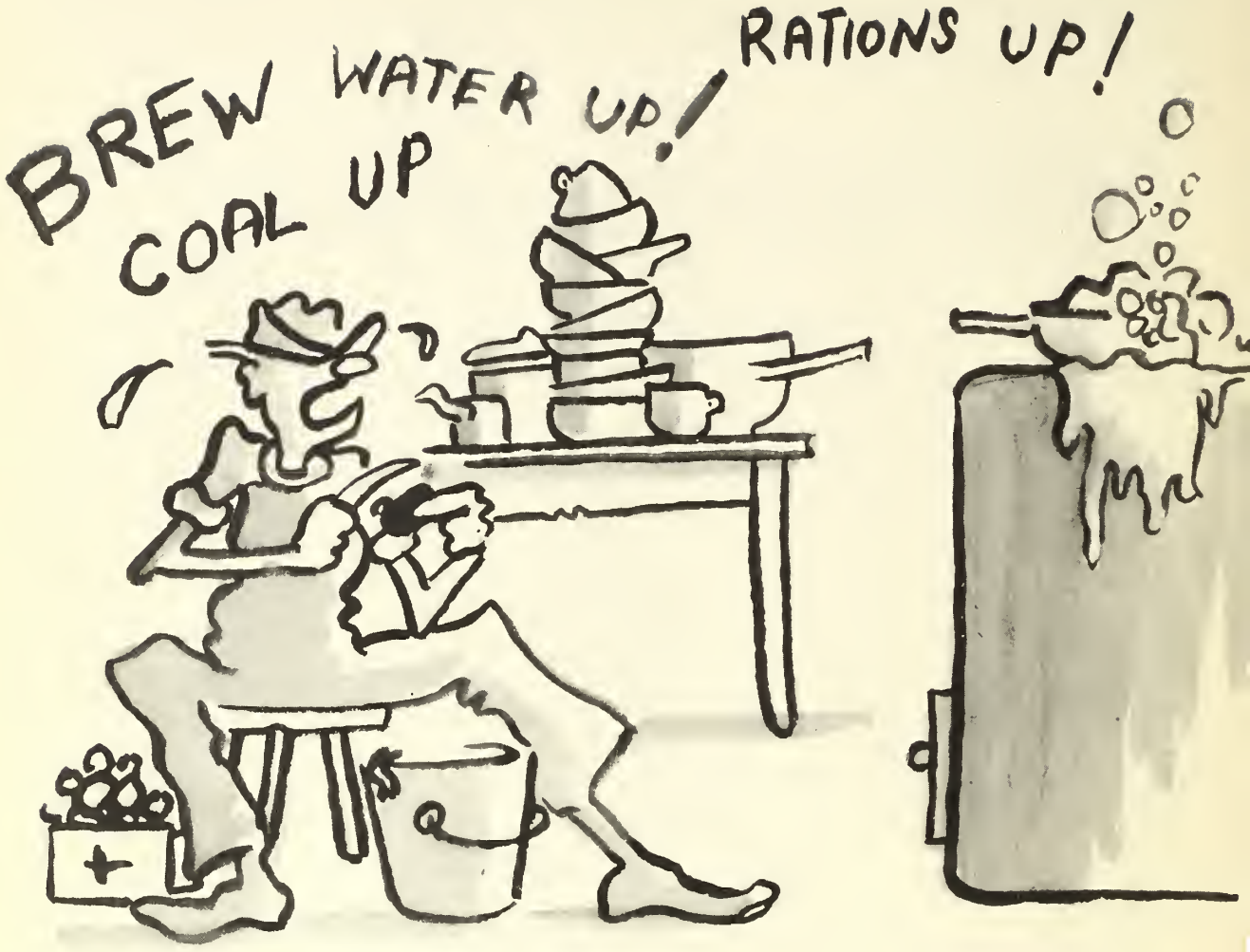
Here is a typical representation of a Kriegie fetching back the water, sloshing to the barracks with two pitchers brimming full. The containers were issued by the Germans and were tin.

STALAG LUFT FASHIONS 1944

SENIOR OFFICERS DRESS

STALAG LUFT FASHIONS 1944

POLISH AIR FORCE MESS KIT



KITCHEN POLICE DAY

Two of us in each room of 18 to 20 men did the cooking for the whole group. The others took turn about at KP and cleaning duties. With only a one-burner stove, KP was an all day job. There were dishes to be washed, potatoes to be peeled --it went on and on and on.

KRIEGIE CAKE

The job of the cook was not an easy one, either. We pooled our food when the Red Cross parcels came in, and learned to whip up tasty dishes out of limited rations. Here a cook is beating up a cake, while a mosquito drills a hole in his nose.

BURNING THE MIDNIGHT OIL

At night when the barracks were locked, the lights went out. But we found a solution to that problem. The margarine the Germans gave us each week was not good for eating. But it burned beautifully. We made lamps out of tin cans. The margarine was the fuel.

BACKFIRE!

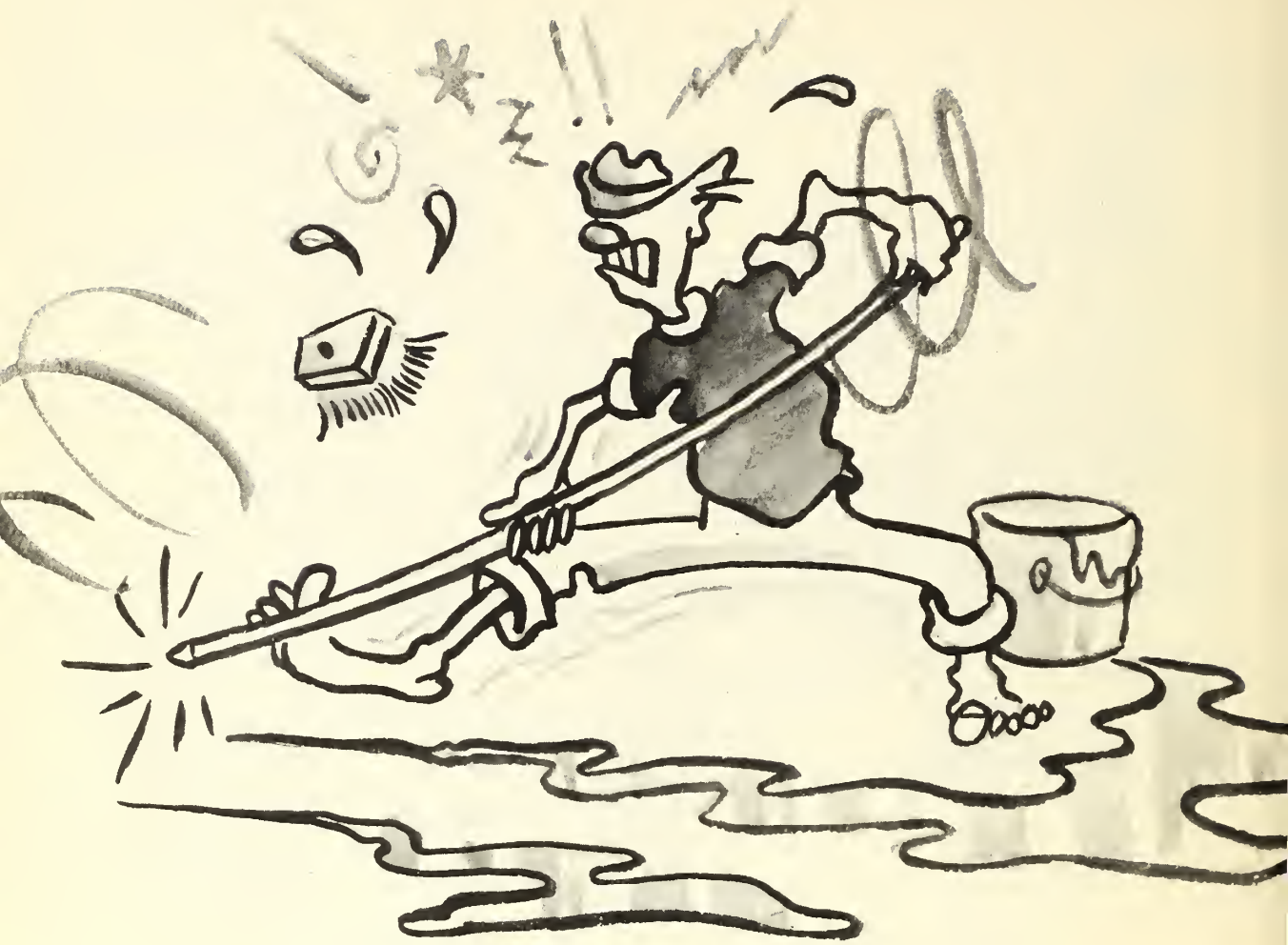
Our Kriegie stove was a temperamental old lady—sulking, smouldering, flaring up, or blowing up right in the face of the cook. Many a luckless cook got the blame for what the stove did or failed to do with our rations.

DRAT THAT CAKE!

It fell—that twenty-man size cake—leaving the cook holding the pan. The others will never believe when he tells them what a cake it was before the fall.

PROBLEM IN SHORT DIVISION

One can of Spam for 12 men—each with eyes staring greedily to pick out the biggest piece. A ruler was the only solution. Kibitzers made the task more difficult.



OWED TO A LOUSE

Once a week the barracks had to be deloused. Viciously we cleaned out every corner. Bugs of all sizes, shapes and forms—with a craving for human companionship—would creep into the room and make themselves at home. It was a perpetual war to keep them on the run.

JERRY CHEESE

There is only one way to describe the cheese the Jerries made us a present of—it stinks. As the aroma wafted through the barracks the Kriegies quickly passed through the door to the air outside—or they passed out completely. Perhaps the best use for Jerry cheese was in asphyxiating rats.

STALAG LUFT FASHIONS 1944

RAF WINTER DRESS

STALAG LUFT FASHIONS 1944

RAF FANCY DRESS

AUTOMATIC WASHER

Oh, yes, we did our own washing, too. But there again we found the easiest way. In the pail is a "dobie stick," made of two tin cans with holes punched in, one outside the other. A sloshing motion makes it react on dirt like a washboard, while the operator lounges in comfort and finishes his mystery story.

AUTOMATIC DRYER

A storming wind from the Baltic was not an occasional happening—it was the order of the day, every day, and added to our clothes-drying difficulties by bringing with it quantities of dust.

There were 201 pairs of pants for 200 men. A Kriegie had to sign up for the "spares" far in advance, or become accustomed to pantless days. Having only one uniform made washing clothes in sections necessary—shirt one time, pants the next. Thus a Kriegie could manage to keep half dressed all the time.

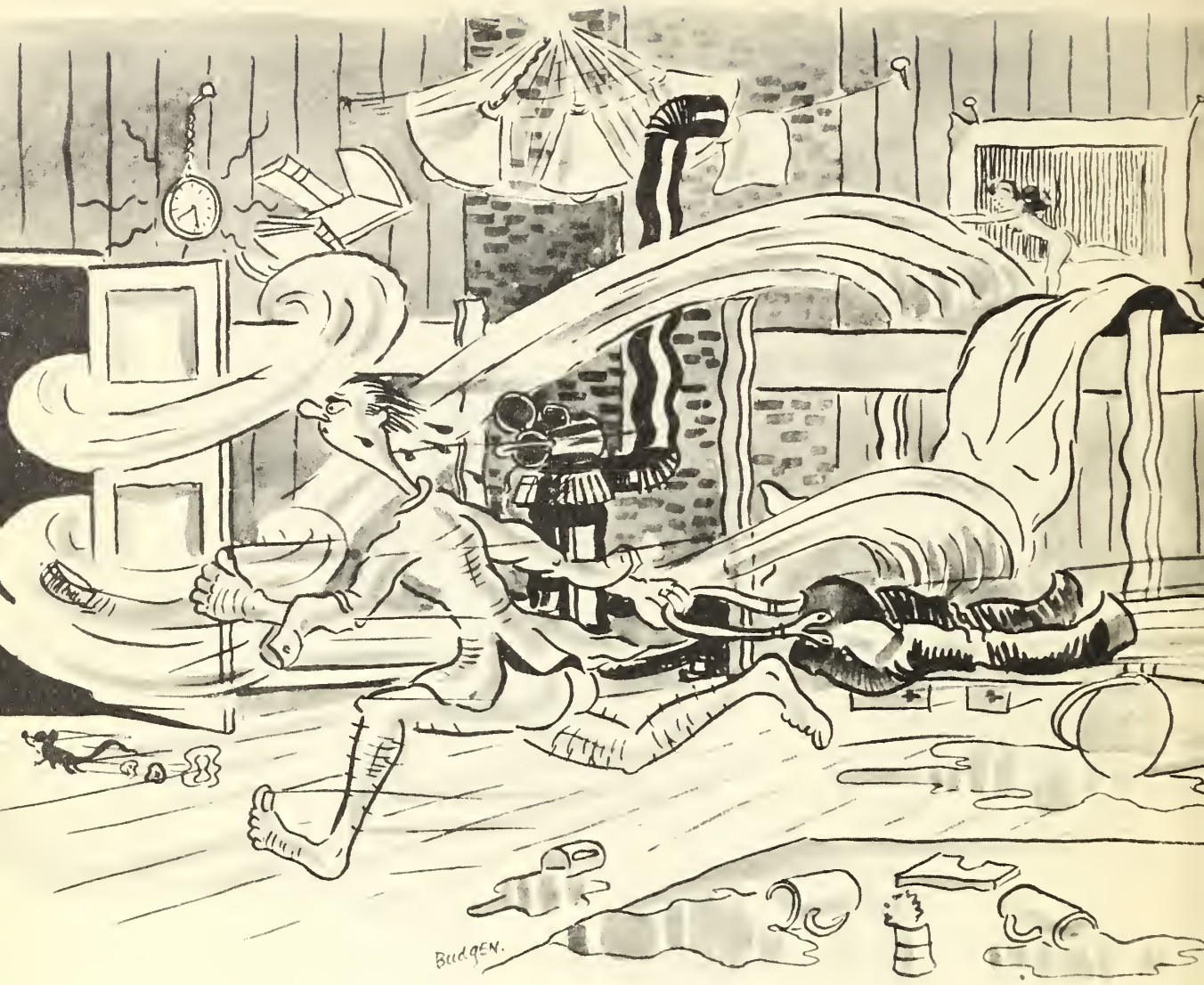
GERMAN CITY MISSING

Of all the sports, air raids were the most popular. The 8th Air Force and RAF planes frequently passed over our camp on the way to objectives. We would stand in the sports field and cheer as if we were at a football game, calling "Over, over!"

When the Germans made us stay in barracks we would hang out the windows and yell. Then the Jerries took shots at us—and no fooling. The air raids brought hope, and though we could no longer be up there, we pulled for our buddies from below.

WHAT SORT OF MYSTERY IS THIS?

The library supplied one means of escape—more certain than a tunnel. There we devoured mysteries, biographies, novels, books on how to do things—anything and everything. The books were kept in constant circulation. When we could not get what we wanted, we read what we could get.



OFF TO ROLL CALL

The Jerries liked us Kriegies to be prompt for roll call. What they liked, we had to like. And we were prompt, even if it meant dressing on the way. Suddenly breaking off a pleasant dream and dashing out, leaving the barracks looking as if a small hurricane had made its way through, was the usual way to beginning another day.

ZIGARETTEN FOR SWIEBELS?

Trades could be worked up with the German guards on the sly. It was against the rules—so what? The guards didn't care if they didn't get caught. And neither did we. Cigarettes were the medium of exchange. One cigarette was worth 28 cents in German money. (Swiebels=onions.)

STALAG LUFT FASHIONS 1944

RAF CEREMONIAL DRESS

STAAG LUFT FASHIONS 1999

THE GREAT ESCAPE

BULL'S-EYE

The food we got from the Red Cross was either dehydrated or canned. Our captors didn't like us to keep the cans closed. They thought it might aid us to escape. (Often it did.) So they stood over us on the day of arrival while we opened each and every can, occasionally with a minor explosion or a squirt into the operator's eyes. If we overate then, we had plenty of time to recover before the next feast.

DUST STORM

As housecleaners we became expert in raising clouds like a prairie storm, with our raggedy brooms, from the planked floor. The dust settled wherever it could find lodging, and then we wiped it off and let it fall back where it was before the storm. Yes, there was a cough in every swish.

HATS OFF TO THE RED CROSS

Red Cross food boxes arrived once a week—they were supposed to. And often they did.

AFTER THE RAIN, KRIEGIES PLAY

Our way of preparing for a rainy day was to build boats during sunny weather. There was a big puddle outside the barracks after the rain had ended. There we would sail rafts of every description while mud squished between our toes—all of us, from eighteen to fifty. This was another means of escape without going anywhere, and a way of keeping sane by going crazy.

GOING NOWHERE FAST

Sometimes we took exercise, having nothing else we could take. It made us hungry. Then we could even eat Jerry cheese. Not margarine. It didn't make us that hungry. Besides, a good pair of legs might come in handy some day.

"HERE'S HOW IT HAPPENED"

Every new Kriegie had a story to tell of how he came to Stalag Luft. Such stories would fill many volumes—good volumes, but not good for us. There was too much horror in the "horror stories." We got tired of hearing them—bored even—and we preferred the story of a murder that didn't occur, from the library.

ALL BALLED UP

The many games in progress all at the same time on the crowded sports field at Stalag Luft made a crossing a hazardous voyage—very much like running an obstacle course. Such games broke the monotony of waiting.

UPS AND DOWNS ON ICE

In winter, ball games were out, and the flat, crowded land made skiing impractical. So we took to ice, on the rink we made in the center of the sports field. The skates were furnished by the YMCA.

OUCH—THAT'S MY HEAD

The players may have been clumsy at volley ball, striking awkwardly, missing the ball, or attempting to volley a blob that was attached to a neck. Good or bad, it was all in good spirit and a part of the great game of passing the time away until the day of liberation.

FOUL BALL

Unhappy was the cook who tried to cross the sports field with a large container. Dinner for the night was doomed, and so was the cook.

MEAT SHORTAGE

Hungry Kriegies stalked the cats who killed the rats as one solution to the meat shortage problem. The colonel was opposed to this, and delivered many a lecture against hunting the "Pomeranian rabbit." His name for them was quite apt. Well cooked cat tastes very much like rabbit.

SNIFFING A JERRY CHEESE

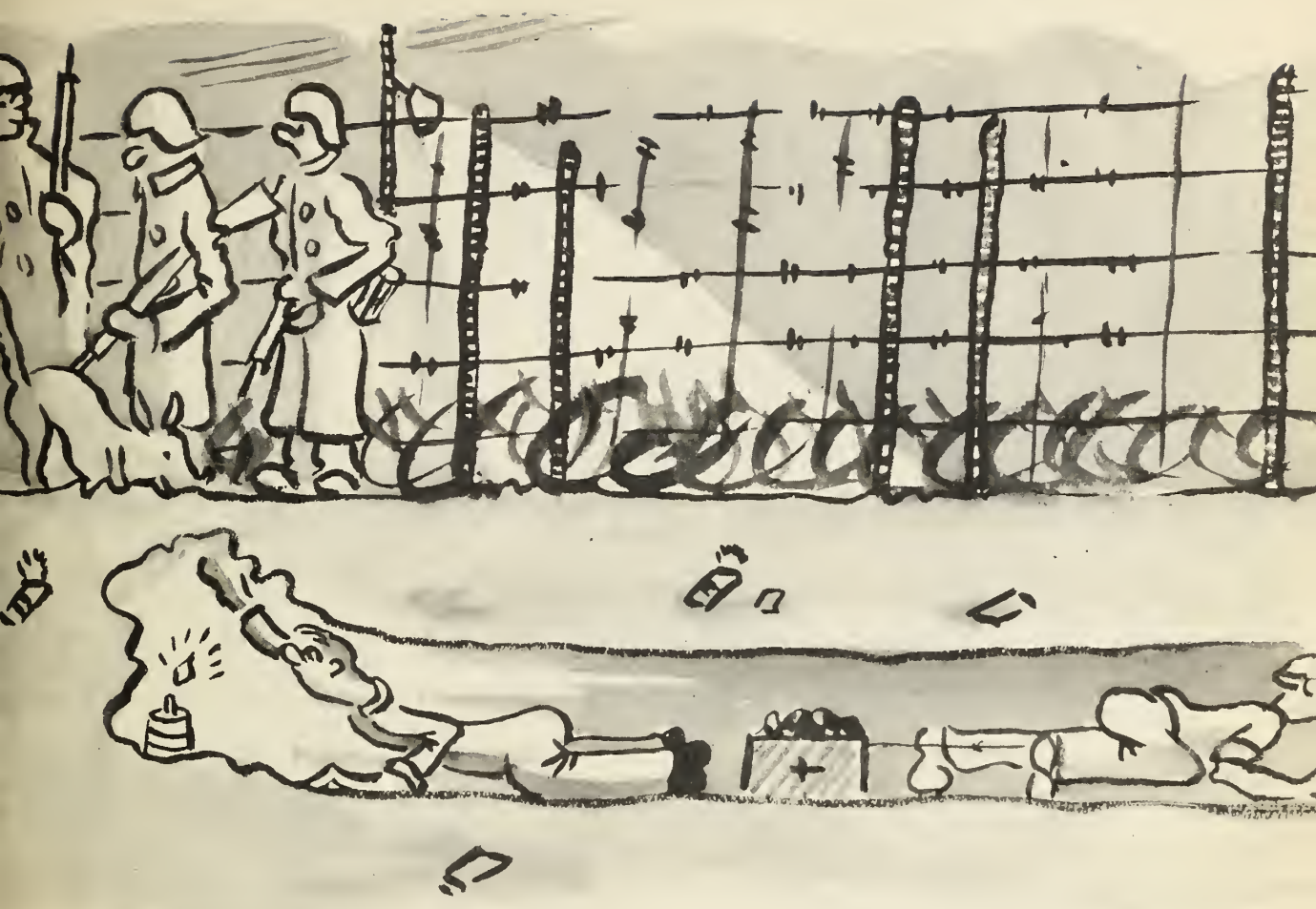
The Jerries had dogs—big hungry dogs. They were trained to jump on escaping Kriegies. On at least one occasion a dog turned on a guard and tore him up a bit. For the cartoon immortalizing the scene, Sgt. Budgen spent a week in solitary confinement.

VERBOTEN

VERBOTEN

THE JERRIES SEARCH

At regular intervals the SS or Gestapo would search our barracks for "verboten" material (such as tin cans, pictures of Germans, or tunnels destined for escape). Their search was thorough, reaching from the roof to below the floor.



A SURPRISE AT THE TOP

Somehow those Jerries always knew where the tunnels we dug would end, and they were waiting. Kriegie Thompson composed a poem about it:

Eager Terrorflieger
Waiting in suspense.
Tonight we use the tunnel
Underneath the fence.

Lufganster prankster
Like a common lug.
Twenty days on diet
In the German jug.

UNDER THE KNIFE

Our own men staffed the hospital at Stalag Luft, and took care of our pains and aches. But one British doctor there was who, preferred to take care of all of them with a knife. We often wondered what would happen if we went to him with a headache.

MISS ANTI-AIRCRAFT AND THE WOLF

Right across the way was a German anti-aircraft school, so placed that the girl students had to pass us to reach their destination. The sport of watching them had, perhaps, more followers than any other. The Kriegies gave full expression to their sentiments with wolfish howls and long, low whistles.

ROLL CALL FOR CANS

In Stalag Luft 1, every can had to be accounted for. So we crated the empties and carried them out for the Jerry count. They may have been valuable for salvage, but there was another more important reason. Tins cans could be used in escapes.

THE ENGLISH WAY

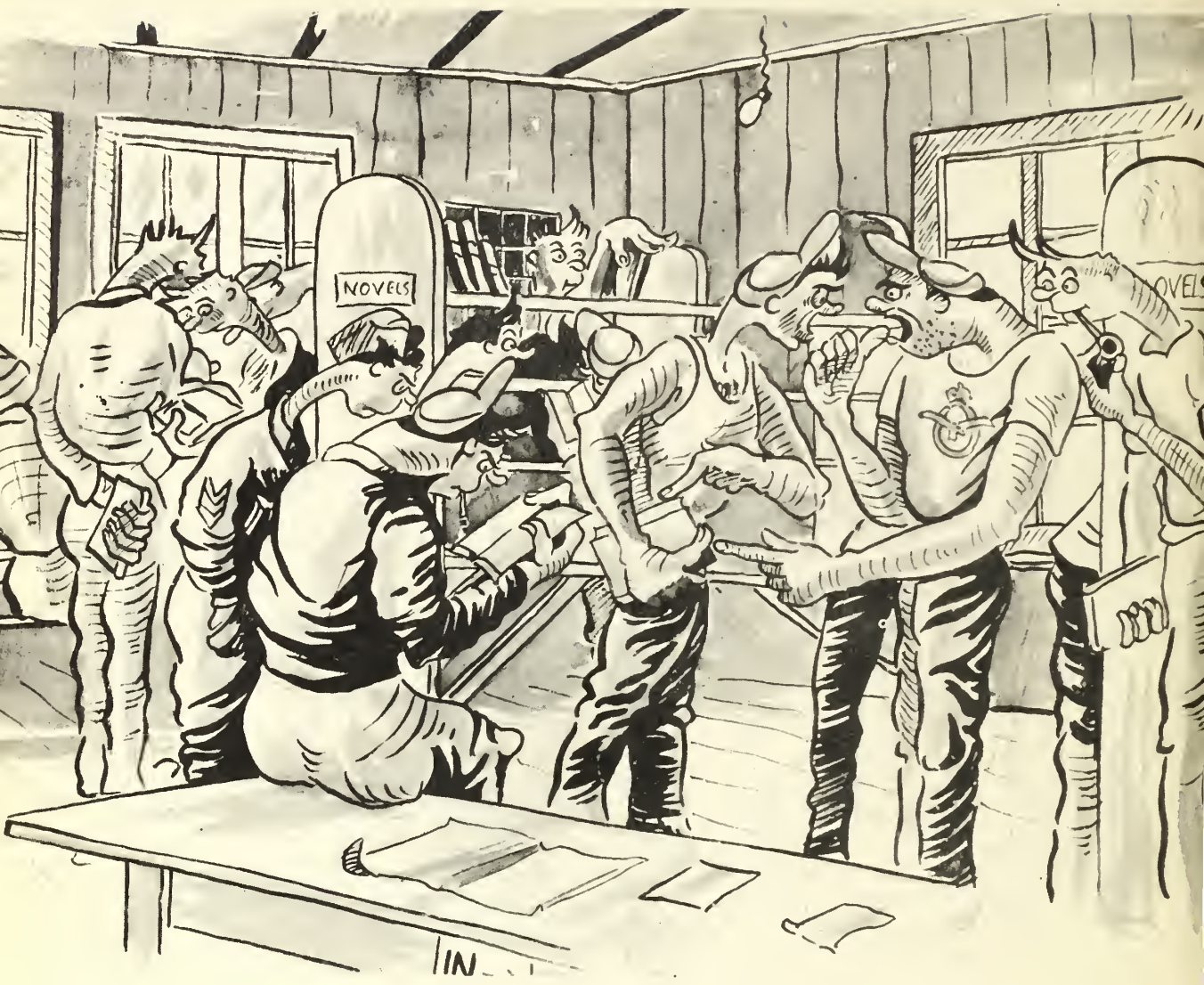
American doctors give vaccinations in the arm. And we often wondered why it was that British doctors insisted that the only spot suitable for injecting a needle was at the tip of the spine.

But whatever his reason a British doctor would stick you in the back every time instead of facing you honestly like an American doctor.

VERBOTEN

B. ARET

VERBOTEN

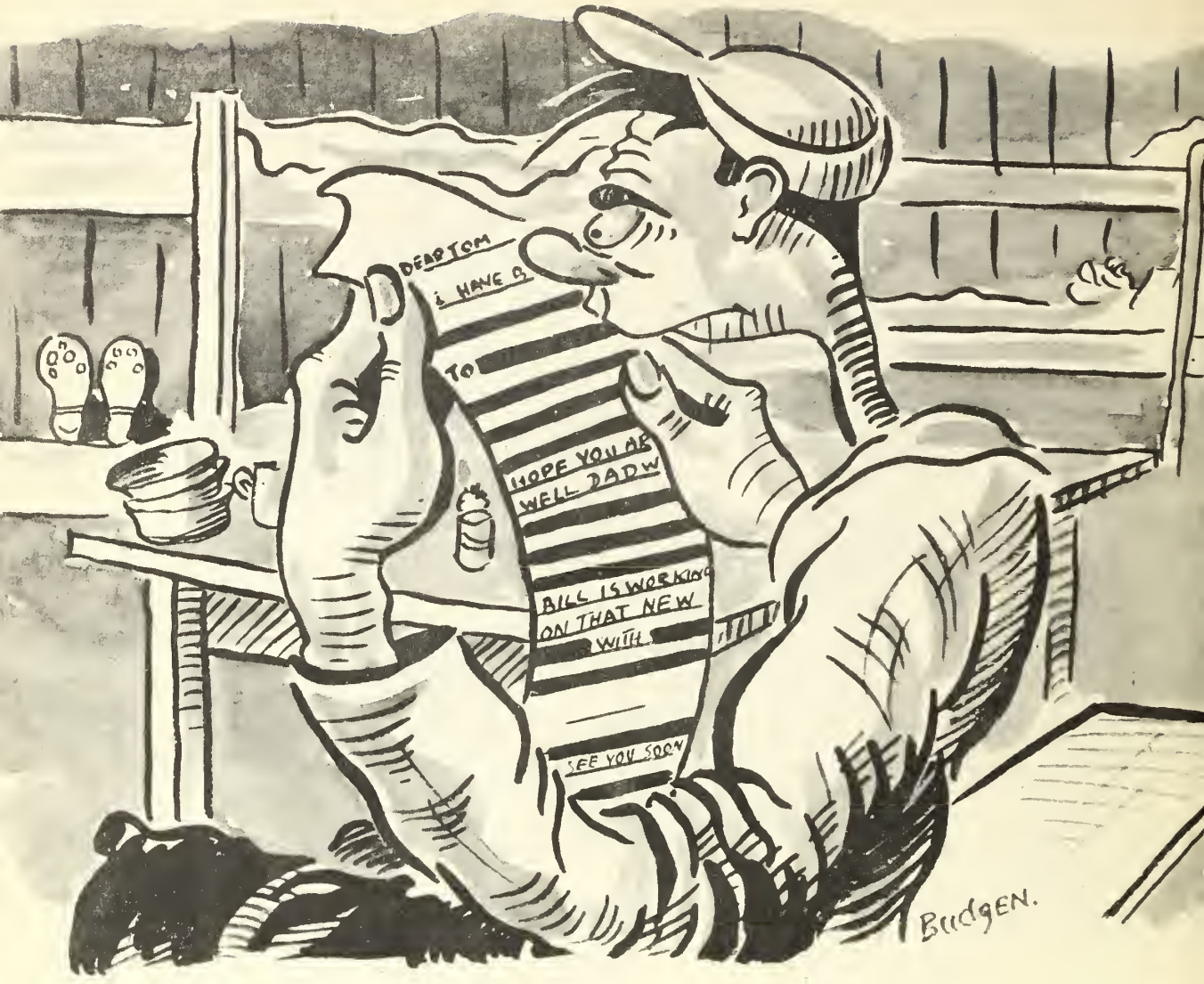


RUMPUS IN THE READING ROOM

The library was a center of prison camp life, where those of us who read only comic books before, got the reading habit. Arguments led to fistplay, as baseball catcher vied with rugby star for possession of "How to Cook in Ten Easy Lessons."

TRADING POST

Similar to the "we swap anything" stores was the food exchange run by an Australian at the camp. There we would exchange prunes for crackers; watches for cigarettes, to be traded in turn with the German guards. Anything movable had its trade value.



"DEAR TOM"

Sometimes fragments of letters got through from home—mostly black lines made by the censor. Nevertheless that's where we got a good part of the news for our news sheet, about ball scores and movies. But it is remarkable how much Tom Kriegie learns about reading between the lines—even black lines filling most of the space between "Dear Tom" and "Devotedly Yours."

A PIN-UP UNPINNED

Dreams brought release from the life of guards, K rations, and volley balls. While day-timid mice skittered across the boards of the floor we visited distant places and people in our sleep. Pin-up pictures on the wall gained life then; the walls were the walls of home.

RUGBY ON THE GREEN

The British play rugby with "bags of hustle."

BASEBALL ON THE DIAMOND

While Americans play baseball with "lots of huba-huba."

COMPETITION FOR DER FUEHRER

The Germans broadcast us news sometimes, and our fastest men took it down in German and translated it into English amid the usual room clatters of dishes, tongues, and feet.

BACK TO SOLITARY

When we were in solitary confinement we were permitted the luxury of a twice-daily walk around the court. Offenses which brought confinement ran something like this: trying to escape, 14 days; failure to salute, seven to 14 days; molesting German property, 14 days; making insulting remarks to Germans, Death!

RED CROSS BOXES IN THE RAIN

The day of the arrival of Red Cross boxes was the most looked-for time in the week. Stomachs grown weary of German food, growled happily at the realization that food was coming.

A LITTLE PRIVACY, OLD CHAP

The Americans were naturally gregarious; the British liked their privacy. Though friendly, they were reticent, and the sanctuary of their barracks was not to be intruded upon, by ball or brogan.

SOME MAIL FOR SOMEBODY

Personal packages arrived in big lumpy bags, and were joyfully received by the Kriegie, and the men in his quarters. More food, and more items to be traded.

GI GENERALS

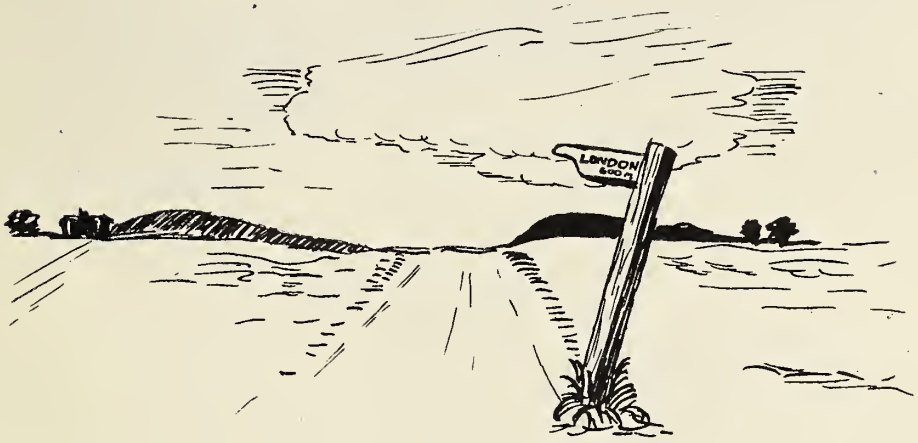
Our war map we kept as up to date as possible. And each possible forthcoming battle was fought many times over the battlefield on the wall before the Allies and Germans ever entangled. Bets on the next move of the Allies provided a comfortable income for some.

CAMOUFLAGE

Kriegies would stand and look nonchalant as a screen for a tunnel-digging accomplice. Digging a tunnel was more complicated than one would imagine from watching the operations of a mole. And there was always the possibility of being buried ahead of schedule.

THE TUNNELLER

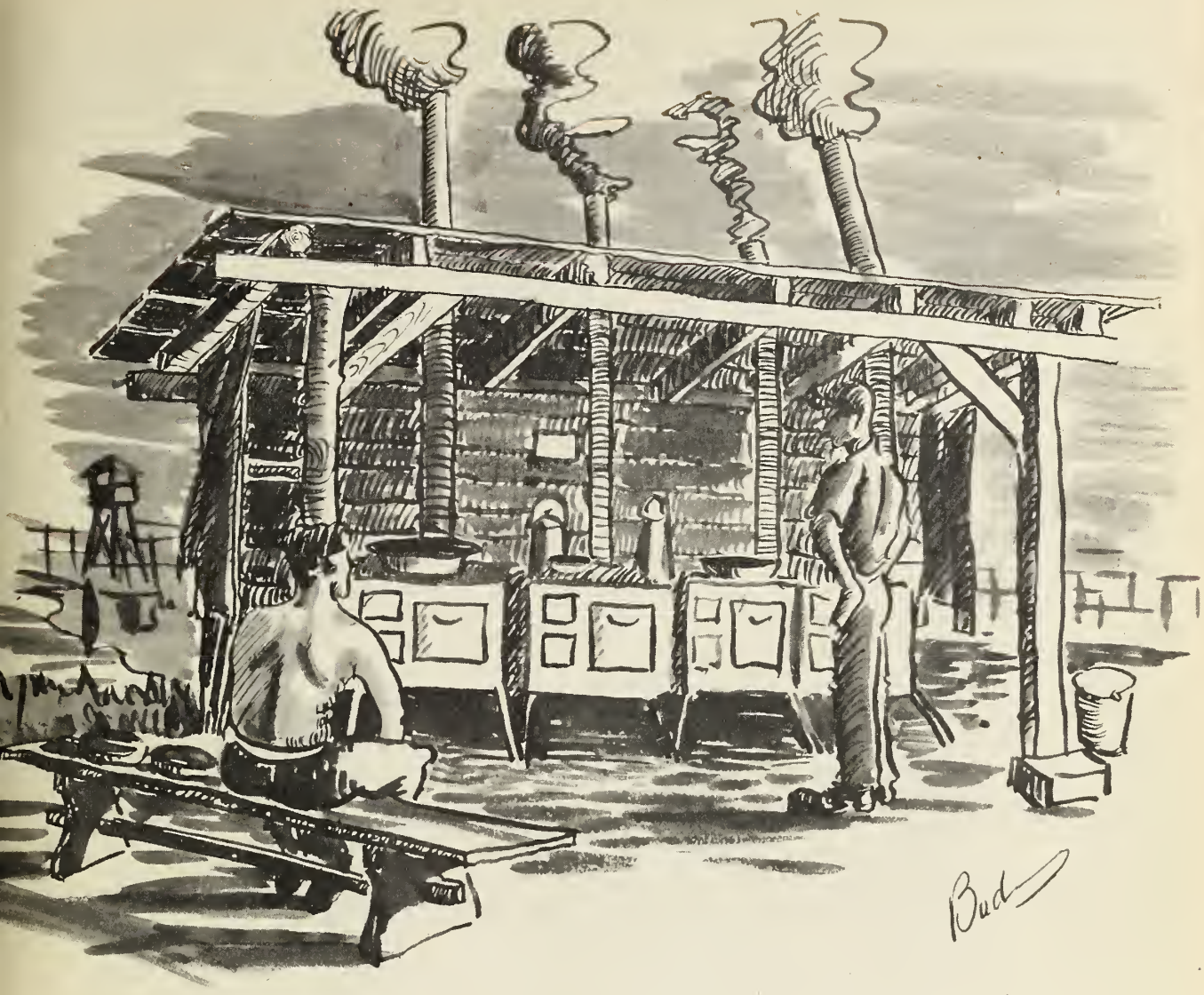
AND



HIS DREAM.

THE BAND PLAYS ON

Among the thousand of Kriegies were many with musical talent. There were few, if any, who did not appreciate music in Kriegieland—prisoners and guards alike. So season after season the concert band played on, taking us through many a flight of fancy into realms we never reached with our planes.



THE BAKERY—BOY SCOUT STYLE

It was merely a flimsy shed with four sagging stove chimneys poked through the low roof. But out of the chimneys rolled smoke, and out from the ovens came appetizing odors that made one dream of home as it was on baking days, and out of the oven came cakes—on rare, not to be forgotten occasions.

STALAG LUFT FASHIONS 1944

CENSORED

VERBOTEN

STALAG LUFT FASHIONS 1944

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